

THE
PRESBYTERIAN DREAM:
OR, THE
Divinity of the Scotch Kirk
EPITOMISED.

cc To which are added *Boisson*
REMARKS on the DISPUTE between
Mr. FOSTER and his *Antagonists*.

Addressed to
The Rev.^d Mr. Bradbury, and S--l F--w-k, Gent.

Upon the Principles of a Christian Philosopher.

L O N D O N :

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PRESBYTERIAN DREAM:

OF THE

Divinity of the Scotch Kirk

EDITED.

To which are added

REMARKS on the Dispute between
MR. FOSTER and his Opponents.

Adapted to

The Rev. Mr. Bannerman, and 3-17 New St. Church.

With the assistance of a Clergyman of the same Church.

LONDON:

Printed for M. Cooper, at the Office in Fleet-Street.



T H E

Presbyterian DREAM, &c.

IN a Country where Liberty reigns paramount, and the smallest as well as greatest Genius is indulged in the Pleasure of appearing in Print, and admiring the Beauties of his own Performance; and where the Consequence of being an Author, though but of an anonymous Six-penny Pamphlet, is very often being revered by his Acquaintance as a Philosopher and a Scholar; in such a Country, and such an Age as this I live: And having a Curiosity to look into most of the Essays and polemical Pieces with which the Publick is constantly entertained, especially those on critical, philosophical, or theological Subjects; amongst others which have lately appeared, I have read with Attention and Satisfaction one intituled, *An Enquiry into the Doctrine of the Trinity, the Mission and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Pre-existence of Souls, and the Resurrection of the Body*, the Author of which has pointed out and refuted several Passages in a Volume of Sermons, which were preached by the Reverend Mr. E. and R. Erskine; but it is clear to me, that he had

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not read one half of those Sermons through, otherwise he could not possibly have been in such a doubt concerning those Gentlemens real Principles, as he appears to be in Page 24, where, after advancing several Arguments, against their Notion of the *Blood of Christ, Satisfaction, the fiery Law, &c.* he asks them, whether *the fiery Law having got full Satisfaction to all its Demands—and its being extinguished,* is to be understood in respect to all Mankind, or only a Part of them. The Singularity both in Sentiment and Reasoning, which appeared in the Quotations, put me upon recurring to the Original, and I have since gone through all those Sermons; and shall by way of Essay or Speculation, on diverse Passages in them which struck my Attention, divert myself with making such Observations, as naturally occur to a Mind in search after Truth, not hoodwink'd by Tradition or Prepossession.

It is remarkable, that they who hold the Doctrine of Election and Reprobation are very apt to talk in an ambiguous Strain, nor is it easy to understand what their real Principles are; and when they are once persuaded to speak them out, which they do with the utmost Caution, they appear to be a Bundle of Incongruities and palpable Contradictions, inconsistent with the Reason of Man, and derogatory to the Honour and Goodness of God. They are therefore under a political Necessity to use Art, and endeavour to draw People over by
insensible

insensible Degrees. I very well remember, when the celebrated Mr. *Whitefield* was at the Summit of Popularity, and had more than ten times the Number of Hearers, to what the firebrand Doctor had who preached against him, he prudently concealed his Sentiments, from his Episcopal Hearers, about the literal Sense of some of the thirty-nine Articles; being very well aware how much they were out of Fashion, and as doubtful whether offering too hastily to revive them, might not quite disconcert his Measures, for bringing back the Church of *England* to her first Principles; and though he knew that every Brother Parson, as well as himself, had sworn or subscribed to every one of these Articles, he likewise might know, what a great Man once very well observed, that these sort of Men are taught rather to *obey* than *understand*.* — He did not therefore suppose that it would be of much Service, publickly to jog their Memories concerning former Promises; but when he entered the Confines of *Scotland*, and found a Sister Church who held the most important Doctrines in their pristine Purity, a Church, in its original Draught, so like his own, that at first Sight it was scarce possible to know wherein they differed; here he found an open Door to unfold the most inward Recesses of his Soul, to unseal the Book of Doom, and read the pre-ordain'd fixed Fate of all the Sons of *Adam*. Whether they owe any of their Sentiments

* Collection of Pieces of Mr. *John Locke*, p. 20.

to the Severity of that frozen Climate, I will not determine; but it must be confessed the Church of *Scotland* is more consistent with it self, than the Church of *England*, in the Article of Election; whether it proceeds from the Members of the latter being greater Masters in Artifice, or that they are really ashamed to espouse it, I cannot say; but it is something extraordinary, and ill comports with Truth, that any Church or Society should be ashamed or afraid, openly to own any Tenet they actually believe, and as strange to profess one which they believe not.

I shall not enter professedly, or at large, into the Argument concerning Election and Reprobation, as the Doctrine has been already repeatedly refuted, by many able Pens; I would particularly refer the Reader, for Satisfaction, to a late ingenious masterly Performance, entitled, *Free and Impartial Thoughts on the Sovereignty of God, the Doctrines of Election, Reprobation, and Original Sin*, and to *A Defence of the Vindication of Mr. Foster's Account of the Behaviour of the late Earl of Kilmarnock*.

It shall at present suffice for me to point out a few Passages in the above Sermons, and remark a little upon them, as just now proposed.

We are told, *The eternal Destination, the Purchase and Application of Redemption, is peculiar ONLY to the Elect; but the Revelation Gift and Offer is common to all the Hearers of the Gospel.*
 — *The Reprobate have as fair a revealed War-*

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*rant to believe as the Elect have.** In consequence of which mock Doctrine, he tells his Hearers, *There is not a Soul of them, but that, in God's Name, he offers Christ unto them, as if they were called by Name and Surname:†* And in another Place, *That the Reason of Mens Condemnation is not for want of an Offer of the Gospel being made to them, but for Want of their Belief.* But then, at the same time, the Reader is to take Notice, that upon these Gentlemen's Principles the Want of Belief is owing to an over-ruling Fatality.

One would think, that to a rational unbiass'd Mind, the bare repeating such Opinions were sufficiently exposing them. If I am not mistaken, it is a Maxim among Philosophers, that self-evident Propositions admit not of Proof or Demonstration. The Mention of such a Truth is sufficient; to attempt any thing further were as ridiculous as it would be unsuccessful. The Case is much the same with respect to some Mens Opinions, the Absurdity of which can scarce be more clearly represented, than in their own Manner of accounting for them.

Upon cool Reflection, it is indeed amazing, that any rational Man should give seriously into these predestinarian Notions. The Church of Rome, I think, has scarce equalled them; to go beyond them is impossible. That there should be any such Thing as *an unconditional, eternal Destination, of the Purchase and Application of Redemption to a Part of Men, and to*

* Serm. p. 117.

† Ibid. p. 134.

a Part only, cannot be true; because such a Destination would be mere Will or Caprice, not only without, but against Reason; and as I have elsewhere observed, if mere Will only was concerned in such a Destination, mere Will may reverse it: Nor can it be true upon these Principles, being in itself contradictory and absurd, *that the Reprobate have as fair a revealed Warrant to believe as the Elect have.* According to this, the Almighty has absolutely laid them under a moral Incapacity to believe, and yet reveals a Warrant for their Belief: He condemns them for their Unbelief, and yet has made it physically impossible they should believe.

If any of them should make Election conditional, and account for it from the Fore-knowledge of God, it would be saying just nothing: Fore-knowledge can have no Influence upon Mens Actions; if they are not free, the Want of Freedom must arise from some other Cause than the Fore-knowledge of God; but admitting the Divine Pre-science, or that God from Eternity knew all the Consequences which would follow, from his creating a Race of intelligent free Beings; that he sees who would and who would not abuse their Liberty; in what Manner every Individual would conduct himself, from the Moment his moral Agency commenced, to the Day of his Death; and in Consequence of such Fore-knowledge determined, that the Fate of each should in Futurity be agreeable to his Behaviour: In this

Sense,

Sense, we may allow them an Election, but it will be an Election that will not serve their Turn, because it puts no Restraint upon a Man's Liberty or his Will, has nothing of Coaction in it, nor makes God a Respector of Persons: The Case would be just the same as if no Election was supposed, or Fore-knowledge put out of the Question. Whereas the Contenders for the Doctrines of Election and Reprobation always consider the Divine Being as having such a partial Respect to some, that he actually COMPELLS them to accept of Salvation; and that no Immorality in their Conduct shall be a Hindrance to it; but the Reprobate, instead of having the Chance and Choice of using their Liberty, if they have any, it is over ruled by some foreign Agency, and they are made wicked and miserable by Necessity.

Thus to limit the Goodness or Mercy of God, and to represent him so arbitrary and partial, is certainly making him the worst of Beings, and is a Doctrine only fit for the worst of Men; and again, as they rest their Election to Salvation upon sovereign Pleasure only, and will not allow good Works to be any Condition of it, or Reason for it, nor will admit that good Works, in those who are out of the Pale of Election, have any Merit or Tendency, or do in the least contribute towards divine Favour or Acceptance (as from their own Writings might at large be proved) they do thereby most effectually discountenance Virtue and Moral Honesty, and make God not only the Ap-

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prover but also the Author of Sin; and therefore they are real Enemies to civil Society. The Manner in which they evade these Charges, only shew the Inconsistency and Unreasonableness of their Scheme, and their own Artifice in Equivocation.

The Author already referred to tells his Believers, *That he must think himself altogether fair in Christ, at the same time that he is altogether foul in himself; that one is the Reason of the other, and necessary to it; that his Deformity was the Foundation of his Faith; that the feeling of his Deformity should not hinder his Faith, which must not stand upon feeling, but must act contrary to it;** *Legalists and Self-justiciaries, i. e. those who plead for the Necessity of good Works as well as Faith, are compared to Dogs, and pronounced worse Enemies to the Gospel of Christ than the worldling or openly prophane;*† *that the Application of the Gospel is neither hinder'd by our Evil nor further'd by our Good;*‡ *that the moral Law, as a Covenant of Works, the Believer has nothing to do with——if it challenges him, he sends it to Christ;*§ *that we are as liable to be damned for our good Works as our bad ones, &c.* These are a few Specimens of the Manner in which your Elect Gentlemen constantly talk; so that they may well cry out in Exstasy as they frequently do——*See from this Doctrine what a happy and privileged Person the Believer is.*

Mr. *Wilson* himself, in his Remarks upon *A Vindication of Mr. Foster*, Page 14. puts his

* Ser. Page 65. † Ibid. 83. ‡ Page 98. § *ibid. Ralph Erskine*, Page 192.

Antagonist upon proving, *Where the Scripture claims, for Repentance and Amendment, a Part in the Honour of Man's Redemption and Salvation* — and yet it is astonishing that the same Gentleman should have the Modesty to tell the World, upon his Adversary's insinuating, “ that they were against the Necessity of good Works, that in the Opinion of some of them good Works were abominable, &c.” — *that there is no Proof of the one, nor Instance of the other* — when the whole of their Writings and publick Profession are so many Proofs and Instances of both.

It must be confessed, they are every bit as consistent with themselves, and with the Truth, in the Doctrine of Believing as in that of Works. Mr. *Erskine* puts an Objection in the Mouth of one his Hearers, and answers it in the following Manner: “ *Object.* Let me mint at believing as much as I will, I shall never be able to effect it, if I be not among God's Elect; for it is only they that are ordained to Eternal Life that do believe. *Ans.* This is an extraordinary Sophism of the grand Enemy of Salvation, whereby he discourages Sinners from believing in the Lord Jesus, and the Fallacy or Weakness of it will easily appear, by applying the Objection to the ordinary Business of Human Life: When Meat is set before you, do ye decline to take or use it, for this Reason, that ye do not know whether God has ordained it for you? Don't ye say, Meat is for the Use of

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“ Man,

“ Man, and this Meat is set before me, and
 “ therefore I will take it? Ye don’t say I will
 “ not plow or sow my Ground, because I
 “ know not if ever GOD has decreed that it
 “ shall bring forth; or I will not go Home
 “ to my House, because I don’t know if ever
 “ GOD has decreed I should come the Length.
 “ Ye would reckon a Man mad, or beside
 “ himself, who would argue at this Rate in Af-
 “ fairs of this Nature: Why, the Case is the ve-
 “ ry same. As the secret Decrees of Heaven lie
 “ quite out of the Road in the Management
 “ of the Affairs of this Life, so neither are
 “ they to be at all the Measure or Rule of our
 “ Actings, in the great Concerns of Eter-
 “ nity.”

The Objection here put, upon the Princi-
 ples of Election and Reprobation, is so far
 from being *an extraordinary Sophism*, that it is
 a plain and natural Inference; and the Manner
 in which this Gentleman eludes it, is a very
 good Specimen of the Sophistical Way in
 which they are used to disguise the Deformity
 of those Doctrines, which, when exposed
 naked, and in their proper Shape, will not bear
 examining, or being brought to the light. The
 Sophism lies not in the Objection, but in the
 Principle from which it arises. It is true, up-
 on the Principles of Reason, Experience, and
 common Sense, it would be accounted a ridi-
 culous Scruple *to decline using Meat when it is set
 before us, because we did not know whether GOD
 had ordained it for us*; and we should be apt to
 reckon

reckon such an one *mad* or *beside himself*; but this at the same time shews the Madness of the Doctrine contended for. A Man's Actions, in the ordinary Affairs of Life, upon the necessitarian Scheme, 'tis allowed, would be like the Actions of a mad Man. If the Scheme were good and consistent, the Actions built upon it must be so likewise. The Case is the same, (the comparison is their own) in the great Concerns of Eternity; to reason in such a manner is allowed to be Sophistical and Mad. The Foundation then of this Sophism and Madness, *viz.* the Doctrine of particular Election, cannot be Truth. If it is not to be supposed the Case, with respect to the ordinary Business of Human Life; that Men are tied down under any Decree of Restraint, either upon their Hands or their Wills, from embracing any temporal Good, that falls in their Way: much less can any such Principle of Fatality be allowed, whereby any Part of them should absolutely be debarr'd or render'd incapable of accepting the Terms of everlasting Happiness, when proposed to them. To suppose a Man in the common Transactions of Life, though he really imagines he has in himself a Power of Self-motion, and that his Actions are the Result of his own Liberty and Intelligence, absolutely under mechanical Impulse, all his Actions resulting from some pre-ordained external Cause, some foreign Agency, would be making the Stage of Life a mock Scene, a continued Deception, not consistent with the Character of

GOD, or the Dignity of Human Nature. It therefore cannot be true, even from our Author's own Confession, with respect to religious Faith, and the Practices necessarily attending it, upon which a final Decision to Happiness or Misery turns. If we really, from what we find pass in our own Minds, are persuaded, upon the clearest Evidence the Nature of the thing can admit of, that we have a Power of Choice, a Capacity of seeking after, judging of, and embracing Truth, a Power of ordering our Conversation agreeable to the Dictates of Conscience; it cannot be true, that we are under a fatal Necessity in all our Thoughts and Actions; that neither of them are free, neither of them our own; neither can it be true, that any particular Pre-Election can limit Salvation to any Part of Men. A Man's Acceptance or Non-acceptance with the great impartial Judge, depends upon the Rectitude or Obliquity of his Mind, and that upon his moral Conduct; and all these upon the Use of the Powers and Faculties wherewith God has endowed him, and the Opportunities he has afforded him.

The Objection then before us, I say, appears, upon the Principle of a Necessitarian, not like the Objection of a mad Man, or one beside himself, but quite rational; though it is indeed visibly so upon the Principle of an Universalian: which by this Gentleman's own Confession, proves their Doctrine to be only fit for mad Men. As to what is alledged here, and
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in Page 152, " That the Covenant of Grace,
 " as it is in the external Dispensation of the
 " Gospel, is to be considered abstract from God's
 " secret Purposes, which are not at all the
 " Measure or Rule of Faith — are not to
 " be at all the Measure or Rule of our Act-
 " ings in the great Concerns of Eternity : " —

It is true, the secret Purposes of God, not being known to us (for if they were known they would not be secret) cannot be the Rule of our Faith and Action ; but the dark Doctrine inferred from hence must not therefore by any Means be admitted. There are undoubtedly many inscrutable Secrets with God, which we shall never know, nor does it concern us to know ; but we may be very sure, the moral Character of GOD assures us, that none of his secret Purposes contradict his known declared Purposes. If GOD Almighty, as they say, *in the external Dispensation of the Gospel, has offered Salvation to all Mankind without Distinction* ; it follows with the Force of a Demonstration, his secret Purpose, respecting that, can be no other but that all Mankind may be saved, if they will embrace the Terms upon which it is proposed ; and these Terms must be within the Limits of every Man's Power and Choice to whom the Offer is made, otherwise the Offer would be solemn Mockery. But let us for once allow them the Supposition, that the secret Purposes of GOD, respecting the Salvation of Men's Souls, are not the same with those exhibited in the external Dispensation of the

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the Gospel, and see what Gainers they will be by it. As the Purpose is a Secret God has kept to himself, they can know no more of it than us; it is Guess-work in both.

P. 117, " 'Tis true indeed, says our Author, " the eternal Destination, the Purchase and Application of Redemption, is peculiar only to the " Elect, but the Revelation Gift and Offer is " common to ALL the Hearers of the Gospel; " inasmuch as the great Mr. *Rutherford* expresses it, the Reprobate have as fair a revealed " Warrant to believe as the Elect have." Here we have both the secret and the declared Purpose of God; how they come acquainted with the former the Lord knows. What is contain'd in the Scripture is the declared Purpose of God, and any thing further (except by a special Revelation) must be Conjecture. Let us admit then, for once, that though the Revelation and Offer of Redemption in the Gospel is common to all Men, *by a secret eternal Destination*, the Elect only, or a Part of Mankind, are intended *for the Benefit and Application of it*, the rest are to be damn'd upon all Adventures. The next Question is, who these Favourites of Heaven are. That too is one of the Secrets of Divine Counsel, but yet they will readily tell you they are the Believers. Let us grant likewise, that thus far they have guess'd right, there is still another Question behind, and that is, what sort of Believers. A Man's Orthodoxy in one Church makes him Heterodox to another. If they should say, as I suppose they will, that
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the Elect are those who believe this Doctrine itself of Election, and that themselves are of the Number, there I must beg Leave to differ from them, being very positive they can give no Proof of it, and guess the Truth to be quite reverse, *viz.* that the Elect Souls, ordained from everlasting to Salvation, are such whose Faith in the Deity is, That he is a merciful, good, impartial Being; but they who can believe him such a Being as to *punish a Part of his Creatures, for Faults they never committed, nor for what they could not help*, and from an Excess of Self-love *think themselves destined to Happiness without Merit*; these only are the Men that are excluded the Pales of Election. This Conclusion I think is as rational as any they can draw from the Principle of Election and Reprobation; nor will they ever be able, how much they may flatter themselves in these besotted Notions, upon these Principles to have any Assurance of their future State. A trusting to that, is much more a Sophism of the Devil, than the Objection just now mentioned, and has a much more specious Tendency to cheat Men out of their Souls.

An Instance of the exceeding Disingenuity and fallacious Reasoning, these Gentlemen can be guilty of, to support their Hypothesis, we have in the Sermons before us. Page 101, " Why, " says our Author, does he (*viz.* GOD) love " any of the Posterity of *Adam*. He tells us " the Reason, *Deut. vii. 7, 8. He loved you be-* " *cause he loved you*; — his Grace, Love and " Good-

“ Good-will, as revealed in the Gospel, is to
 “ be believed with Application to yourself,
 “ for no other Reason but because it is his
 “ Will and Pleasure.” The Reader will ob-
 serve, that what is here drove at, is to persuade
 him that the Conduct of the Almighty, respect-
 ing Mankind, is upon mere sovereign Will,
 without Regard to any moral Reason or Mo-
 tive. Besides the Absurdity of confounding or
 making Cause and Effect the same, the Text
 of Scripture quoted to support that Opinion is
 most grossly perverted. — He gives it us thus,
He loved you because he loved you. The Passage of
 Scripture runs in the following Words, *The*
Lord did not set his Love upon you, nor choose
you, because ye were more in Number than any
People; (for ye were the fewest of all People)
but because the Lord loved you, and because he
would keep the Oath which he had sworn unto
your Fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with
a mighty Hand, and redeemed you out of the house
of Bond-men, from the Hand of Pharoah King
of Egypt; and the two next Verses explain and
illustrate the Sense of the foregoing; Know
therefore, says the Text, that the Lord thy God
be is God, the faithful God, which keepeth Covenant
and Mercy with them that love him and keep his
Commandments, to a thousand Generations, and
repayeth them that hate him, to their Face, to
destroy them. Whether such an Abuse of sacred
 Writing is more to be imputed to Want of
 Honesty or Understanding, the Reader need
 not be much at a loss to determine; but what
 may

may they not do or say, whose Election has secured them from suffering for either? One thing I will freely allow, that if the Advocates for the Doctrine of particular Election, and their Adherents, are really the People, *they are Elected for no other Reason but that they are Elected*. If the Almighty had reasoned upon the Matter, when he was about fixing the Number of the Elect, and who they should be, he certainly would have set nine-tenths of these aside, and chose others in their Room. But waving that, I beg Leave in this Place just to observe, that though I do not agree with those who are of Opinion, that *Motives act upon the Will as Weights do upon a Ballance* (being, I think, inconsistent with the proper Idea of Liberty and Intelligence) yet, that any intelligent Being, much less the most perfect ~~all~~ of Beings, should act merely upon Will, without Reason, seems to me extremely unphilosophical. I think it impossible, and an express Contradiction, for the Mind to will any thing, without a Reason for willing, either by some Judgment formed in the Understanding of the Fitness or Propriety of the Thing inclining the Will, or Motives without, working, not as efficient Causes, but Occasions, upon it. Wrong Motives, or false Reasons, can have no Influence but where there is a Defection in the Understanding, or Corruption in the Will. This was not the Case respecting the supreme Lord of the Universe, nor could he be biased by any partial Consideration. Election cannot be

so much as supposed, without allowing Foreknowledge. The whole Scene of Human Transactions were, from the Beginning, in Idea present to the Divine Mind ; and he prejudged of, or determined concerning them, as if they had actually been ; so that in Reality what is called Predestination, is only an Idea in the Divine Understanding, of a Chain of Causes and Effects, a Train of Events brooding in Futurity.

“ The Gospel notifies in general, that the
 “ Vail is rent for you all, so far as that God
 “ calls and commands you all to come into
 “ the Holiest by this Way—and if you do not,
 “ you shall be damned for your Neglect of it.*
 “ There was a Covenant of Works made with
 “ the first *Adam*, and his Seed before the Fall,
 “ and therein God was upon these Terms with
 “ Man, *do and live, and if ye do not, ye shall*
 “ *die.* Now as by the Fall of Mankind the
 “ Precept of Doing is broken, and the Penal-
 “ ty of Dying is incurr’d, and Eternal Life is
 “ forfeited ; so our Salvation is impossible
 “ without a perfect Righteousness ; a Righte-
 “ ousness of Obedience, performing the Pre-
 “ cept of the Law, and so entitling to Life ;
 “ a Righteousness to Satisfaction, undergoing
 “ the Penalty of the Law, and so delivering
 “ from Death : the former is impossible to us,
 “ for we are dead in Sins and Trespases, and
 “ so can never perform any Duty acceptable
 “ to God.—The latter is impossible, for being

* Sermon. p. 184.

“ both

“ both finite and sinful Creatures, we can ne-
 “ ver give infinite and sinless Satisfaction. ||——
 “ The Covenant of Works being made with
 “ *Adam*, not only for himself but for his Pos-
 “ terity; all Mankind, descending from him
 “ by ordinary Generation, sinned in him, and
 “ fell with him in his first Transgression.—
 “ The Effect of this Fall is, that we are guil-
 “ ty of *Adam*’s first Sin, liable to the Pains
 “ of Hell for ever, &c.† There is a Cove-
 “ nant of Grace provided for the Recovery of
 “ some by Jesus Christ——or God having
 “ out of mere good Pleasure, from all Eter-
 “ nity, Elected some to Everlasting Life, did
 “ enter into a Covenant of Grace, to deliver
 “ them, &c.——God having, in his Eternal
 “ Decree of permitting the Fall, foreseen the
 “ Ruin of Mankind, by the Breach and Vio-
 “ lation of the Covenant of Works, graciously
 “ purposed not to proceed against all; Man-
 “ kind, according to the Demerit of their
 “ Transgression, &c.‡ He promises his holy
 “ Spirit to work Faith and all other saving
 “ Graces; and though this and all the other
 “ absolute Promises of the Covenant shall cer-
 “ tainly be accomplished, and actually applied
 “ to the ELECT ONLY; yet in the external
 “ Dispensation of the Gospel, and Administra-
 “ tion of the Covenant, they are revealed
 “ and exhibited in a general indefinite Way
 “ and Manner, with an Universal Offer and
 “ Command to all and every one that hear

|| Serm. p. 214, 215.

† P. 215.

‡ P. 216.

“ this Gospel, to plead them, and lay hold
 “ upon them, that the Hearers of the Gospel
 “ may be left inexcuseable that embrace it
 “ not, and that the Elect may be gathered
 “ in, MADE to believe, and come under the
 “ Bond of the Covenant.”* The Reader may
 judge how far these Passages agree, or jar with
 one another; let us consider them separately,
 and see how far any of them agree with Truth.

As to the first, 'tis in plain *English* thus,
 GOD has, by a secret Decree, deprived the
 greatest Part of Mankind of a Power of going
 to Heaven, and yet by a publick Proclamation
 tells all Mankind they may go there, and
 moreover damns them because they will not,
i. e. because he will not let them go.

As to a Covenant of Works being made
 with *Adam* and his Seed before the Fall, it is
 a mere Calvinistical Dream, not reconcileable
 to Truth; no such Covenant of GOD could
 take Place, or to any Signification be made
 with the Posterity of *Adam*, till they came
 into Being, and were capable both of under-
 standing the Covenant, and keeping it: The
 Covenant with *Adam*, it is true, was, *do and*
live, and if ye do not, ye shall die. It was the
 same afterwards with *Adam's* Posterity. It is a
 Covenant of a moral Nature, of divine and per-
 petual Obligation; not abrogated, or set aside by
 the Introduction of the Gospel. God Almighty
 requires as strict, if not a stricter Conformity
 to this Law, since that as before. The Language

* Serm. p. 218.

of the Gospel, as well as the Law, is, that *Every Man shall be rewarded according to his Works.**

We grant, that *by the Fall of Adam the Precept of Doing was broken, and the Penalty of Dying incurred, and, without Repentance, eternal Life forfeited, by the Breaker of the Precept*; but deny that this is true in respect to any but the actual Offender. Whatever Inconvenience might follow to *Adam's* Posterity from his Fall, eternal Life to them could not be forfeited by it. One may be accounted for, the other can not.

If the Posterity of *Adam* were, by his Fall, put under such Circumstances or Incapacity, without any Consent or Concurrence of their own, as not to be able, not having a moral Capacity, to conform to the Precepts of that Law which was given to *Adam*, and which he broke; in that Case the same Law could not be binding upon them, because Moral Law always implies Moral Capacity; so that neither in this Sense, nor in any other, can this Gentleman's Reasoning be allowed to be conclusive.

That *all Mankind sinned in and fell with Adam*, is a mere Dogma, not back'd by any good Authority, not proveable from Reason. Sin is a Transgression of some Law. A moral Agent must be pre-supposed to such Transgression; but that was not the Case with *Adam's Posterity in him* (if they were in him

* *Matth. xvi. 27.*

in any Sense) and therefore they could neither sin in him, nor fall with him; as the Effect of the Fall could not *make us guilty of Adam's first Sin*, so neither are we from thence liable to the Punishment of it—the Pains of Hell for ever.

Allowing that *Salvation is impossible, without a perfect Righteousness; a Righteousness of Obedience, performing the Precept of the Law, &c.* the Inference must be denied, viz. *That this is impossible to us, that we can never perform any Duty acceptable to God.* Nothing, in the very Terms, can be a Duty, which is an Impossibility. By the Assistance of divine Grace we may perform every Precept of the Law, every Duty acceptable to God, which he enjoins. It was by this Grace that the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Holy Men in all Ages, were enabled to do those Things that pleased God, and in consequence thereof were accepted of him; and without it *Adam* himself, even before his Fall, could not please God: He was dependent upon his Creator then as well as we are now.

As to what is said of *our Salvation being impossible, without a Righteousness to Satisfaction, undergoing the Penalty of the Law, &c. and that being impossible to us, for being both finite and sinful Creatures, we can never give infinite and sinless Satisfaction* — *That the least Sin is against an infinite GOD, and infinite Authority, and cannot be expiated without infinite Satisfaction*: The Author of the two Tracts, already refer'd

refer'd to, has so fully and clearly refuted this senseless Doctrine, that 'tis needless here to enlarge upon it. It is unquestionably true, that we cannot give infinite Satisfaction; and 'tis as evidently true, that GOD never required it. To give Satisfaction implies an Act; to give infinite Satisfaction would be an infinite Act: An infinite Act can only be the Act of one who has infinite Power, and even when so applied, I believe these Gentlemen will be hard set to explain or define, what an infinite Act is.

The least Sin being against an infinite GOD, cannot make it require infinite Satisfaction; but only Satisfaction in Proportion to the Sin. The Distinction of least or greatest Sin, upon such a Principle, were absurd; besides, if every Sin required infinite Satisfaction, because it was against an infinite GOD, then infinite Satisfaction must be made as often as there had been particular Sins committed in the World, AT LEAST BY THE ELECT. What Mr. Wilson says on this Head, in his Remarks, &c. viz. Who among us ever asserted, that the Merits of Christ are infinite in their Application? What we contend for is, that they are infinite in their Worth and Value, besides its being almost explaining away their own Doctrine, is an Instance how they will cut and shuffle, when pinched, rather than submit to Truth. I shall not take the Controversy with Mr. Wilson out of an abler Hand, but only desire him, next Time he writes, to tell us, how we are to judge of Merit any other Way than in its Application.

What

What further Part Mr. *Wilson* may act in that Debate I cannot tell, but I think his own Reputation, and the Cause he espouses, call loudly for something to be done; thus far, in the Opinion of the Publick, the Advocate for Mr. *Foster* has, in Point of Argument, greatly the Advantage of him. That Gentleman has handled those critical Subjects with uncommon Sagacity; there is besides a Mixture of Wit and Humour in his Writings, which adds Beauty to his Reasoning. In one Place he is very sarcastical upon the Author of *An Enquiry into the Doctrine of the Trinity, &c.* “ for making too free with one or two of his
 “ former Pieces, without fairly quoting of ei-
 “ ther, when at the same Time he had in-
 “ troduced Mr. *Locke* in all due Form and
 “ Ceremony.”——The Remonstrance is without doubt very just, and such an Instance of Partiality discovers the Author of *the Enquiry, &c.* to be as unpolite in his Conduct as he is an unfit Judge of Merit. All the World will allow Mr. *Locke* was a very great Man, and where the Affinity of Subjects will admit it, to introduce his Authority cannot fail of adding Weight to an Argument; but great as he was, he may be equalled; the Author of *Free and Impartial Thoughts,—of a Defence of the Vindication,—&c. &c.* writes as well as any either of his Contemporaries or Predecessors, and consequently as much Respect is due to him as to any of them; not the great Mr. *Locke* excepted. It is therefore to be hoped the Gentleman complain’d of
 is

is by this time convinced of his Error, and that for the future, when he makes such near Approximations to Brother Authors of the first Magnitude, he will pay them all proper Obeisance.

As to Mr. *Wilson*, in my humble Opinion, the Appeal does not lie from the Pulpit to his own Congregation, but from the Press to the Publick; nor do I see the Service or Fairness of these Oratorical Declamations, where only one Side is heard, and where the Hearers never examine the other Side of the Question. I'll answer for it, without any such Caveat, ninety-nine out of a hundred of Mr. *Wilson's* Flock will hold fast their Faith without wavering; will continue stedfast Retainers of that Original Nonsense which they sucked in with their Mothers Milk, maugre all the popular or most cogent Arguments that can be advanced to the contrary. But to return,

If we consider what Idea is properly conveyed by the Fall of Man, and its Effects, we may the better judge how far that can be recovered by the *imputed Merit of the Suffering of Jesus Christ*. By the Fall, or by Sin, and a Transgression of the Divine Law, the Minds of Men became depraved and corrupt; absorbed in Sense, and estranged to Virtue; insensible of the Excellency of it, incapable of relishing the Happiness which flows from it. Heaven itself is not so much to be considered under the Notion of a local Place, as with regard to the Rectitude, Serenity, and Enjoyment of the Mind. Now it is evident, what is wanting in

this Lapse or State of Transgression, is an internal Rectitude, which can only be effected by an internal Operation. Paying a Debt or making Satisfaction, then, is not the thing, but working a Change, a bringing the Chaos of the Mind into Order. *Making Satisfaction* implies Damage being sustained by the Party to whom Satisfaction is made. In Strictness of Speech, the Divinity cannot suffer any Damage; and in that Sense cannot want any Satisfaction.

The Covenant of Works made with *Adam* could not be for his Posterity, but for himself only, and (considered as a positive Precept) could in no Sense operate in respect to them, until they successively came into Being, and understood it, and the Obligation arising from it. Abstractedly considered indeed, the Covenant or Law of God is eternal. We may consider the Almighty as having conceived in himself from the Beginning the Idea of a Creature MAN, which he determined in Time to bring into a State of Existence; and at the same time, or of as old a Date, as sure as this was resolved on, so sure would be determined the Nature of those Laws which should be given him, and by which he should be governed, as has been above observed.

I know of no Argument which will prove that *God out of mere good Pleasure, from all Eternity, elected SOME to Everlasting Life*, but what will as well prove he elected ALL. If he *graciously purposed not to proceed against*
all

all Mankind according to the Demerit of their Transgressions; let them shew why he should not, or did not purpose, not to proceed against ANY: Only by the Way, they may save themselves the Trouble of offering as Proofs their partially culled and strained Texts. In the mean time if I may give my own private Opinion, I think it much more agreeable to the moral Character of the Supreme Being, that he should at last finally restore, and save EVERY rational Creature, both MEN and ANGELS, than that he should pre-ordain, and by an inevitable Fatality subject any ONE of EITHER to Eternal Misery. The Transmigration of the *Pagan Philosophers* may with much greater Ease be defended, than the Hell of the Predestinarians.

If they mean no more than what they say, of *God's having, in his Eternal Decree of permitting the Fall, foreseen the Ruin of Mankind, &c.* it is quite absurd; it is only in plainer English to say, *that God resolved to create Man a free Being, and at the same time determined he should not be a necessary Being.* If he foresaw that Man would abuse his Liberty, he must either determine to permit him to do so, or put a Restraint upon him, or not endow him with Liberty.

Page 240. We are told, — *that Christ was plunged in the Ocean of God's Wrath, and SUFFERED ALL THE HELL that was due to Sin*; and yet if we consult the same Author in other Places, we shall find by his Account, the Hell that is due to Sin is Eternal Tor-

ment. How can TEMPORARY and ETERNAL be equal? And moreover if *Christ had suffered all the Hell that is due to Sin*, and if (as they say) *it is inconsistent with Justice to punish the same Transgression twice*, does not this prove, if it proves any thing, that all Mankind are hereby exempted from Punishment?

Page 256. " Let *Armenians* maintain at " their Peril, their universal Redemption, but " we must maintain at our Peril the universal Offer: Necessity is laid upon us, and " Woe to us if we preach not this Gospel " to every Creature." The *Armenians* universal Redemption is by much a more reasonable and Christian-like Doctrine, than what is opposed to it. What solemn Cant is it to talk of an universal Offer, when at the same time three-fourths of those to whom the Offer is made, have their Hands tied down from accepting it? And to stamp this sham Commis- sion so high, as to say a Necessity is laid upon them, is I think Blasphemy, if any Doctrine ever yet introduced into the Christian Church can deserve that Name. Indeed he must transcribe the greatest Part of these Gentlemens Sermons, who would point out all the Absurdities, Contradictions, false Doctrines, and false Reasonings, with which they are fraught.

Page 322, and 323. " The first Sin of eat- " ing a little forbidden Fruit, the tasting of an " Apple, had it not been for Christ's Satis- " faction, would have destroyed irrecoverably " all the Posterity of *Adam*." Who told this sanguine

sanguine Conjuror, that *the forbidden Fruit was an Apple*, he has left us to guess; nor what Reason he has for being so dogmatical in asserting, that what is said of the forbidden Fruit is to be literally understood, does not appear; but that this Offence of *Adam's* should entail Destruction without Recovery on all his Posterity, must at first sight appear monstrous and false, to every one but those whose imaginary Election has taught them to believe Lyes.

Page 325. " The utmost Human Reason
 " can do, is but to think of Mercy without a
 " Promise, which is a very arbitrary thing,
 " and we see that God hath not shewed Mer-
 " cy to the fallen Angels; for never was any
 " Devil converted." 'Tis granted that Human Reason can see no further than Mercy without Promise, and that in some Sense this may be said to be arbitrary, but not so very arbitrary as they would have us believe; nor is this any Justification of partial Promises. If God himself is an arbitrary Being, that is, a Being whose Actions have no other Standard but WILL; then to think of Mercy without Promise is a very uncertain thing, and, upon this arbitrary Principle, we are every whit as uncertain of Mercy, after the Promise is made; for such an arbitrary Being can never be depended on, in keeping his Word.* But though Human Reason may of itself be unable to see beyond arbitrary and uncertain Things, respecting that

* See the Argument drawn from the Sovereignty of God unanswerably refuted by the Author of *Free and Impartial Thoughts*, &c.

grand Event of GOD's Disposition regarding the Souls of Men, REVELATION has (maugre all the Lure of PREDESTINATING DARKNESS) clearly informed us, that GOD is not an arbitrary, but a good and merciful Being, and that he wills the Salvation of ALL MEN. As to what our Author says about the fallen Angels, 'tis only an Assertion, without Proof or Authority. The Moral Character of GOD is Love and Mercy; and there is no room to doubt of his Dealing with the fallen Angels, upon the same Principle that he did with fallen Men, that is, according to their Crimes; if theirs were greater than ours, so would their Punishment be; if they continue wicked to Eternity, they must be Eternally miserable, for Wickedness is Misery. But as to the Fact of *never any Devil being converted*, it lies upon him that asserted it to prove. I think from Scripture it cannot be proved, and it is not a self-evident Proposition. Popular Notions don't constitute Truth.

Page 497. " Oh! will Faith say, Lord, I
 " have indeed sinned, and deserved thy Wrath,
 " and if thou mark Iniquity I cannot stand; but
 " here is my Relief, my Surety has done and
 " suffered all that the Law required——and
 " 'tis inconsistent with Justice to punish the
 " same Transgression twice —— who can lay
 " any Thing to the Charge of God's Elect?" —
 Why truly, upon these Principles, none can just-
 ly lay any Thing to their Charge, though they
 really were (to use Mr. *Erskine's* Words) *ugly*
Sinners,

Sinners, as ugly as Devils and as black as Hell; they can stretch themselves upon Beds of Ivory, and bless themselves in their Sins: but however secure they may think they are, in their *supposed Election*, and *imputed Suffering*, I strongly suspect that in the Day of Disquisition, the Sinners in this *Sion* of theirs will be afraid, and Fearfulness will surprise their Hypocrites.

The *Pharisees*, in our Saviour's Time, in many Respects resembled these Moderns; they were as strict Predestinarians as these can be, confined the universal Benevolence of Heaven to the narrow Limits of their own Sect, excluding the Bulk of Mankind as beneath the Divine Notice. I know but of one material Difference betwixt them; one placed the Certainty or Signature of their Acceptance in external Ceremonies, which were of no publick Utility, the other place it chiefly in Opinions.

It is certainly true, that *it is inconsistent with Justice to punish the same Transgression twice*, supposing the first Punishment adequate; but it is certainly as inconsistent with Justice, to punish one for the Offence of another. A Transgression of the Law requires Repentance; if then *Christ has done all for them that the Law requires*, he must have repented. Repentance can only arise from Conviction, or a Consciousness of personal Guilt, and Guilt from a Consciousness, in the same Individual, of actual Sin. Guilt then cannot be transfer'd, no more than Consciousness; if Consciousness were transferable,

ferable, personal Identity could not be ascertained; but it is as impossible to transfer the same individual Consciousness from one Person or Subject to another, as it is to make any two distinct Bodies to be one and two at the same Time. As Christ never sinned nor transgressed the Law, he neither could be conscious of any Guilt nor repent. This Argument will operate equally against the Doctrine of Original Sin, and proves that neither *Adam's Sin*, nor the Guilt of it, could be transfer'd to any of his Posterity; and from hence it will appear, that the Conclusions deduced from *Adam's being a publick Person*, or what they call *Representative Head*, is unintelligible Gibberish.

There is one grand Inconsistency in the Writings of the Advocates for particular Election, which to my Apprehension intirely destroys their own Fabrick. *Elisba Coles*, their great Apostle, whom most or all of them copy after, places *the Root of Election, the great Bottom-ground on which it is founded, upon Will or Pleasure, exclusive to all things else, as being any way causal, contributory, or motive thereunto, — independent as to Human Performances — that Election always supposes a greater Number out of which the Choice is made, and an arbitrary Power in him that chooseth — that it shuts out all Works and Worthiness of Men, from being any way causal, influential, or motive thereto — that Grace and Works are inconsistent in the Cause of Salvation — not with Respect to Mens Deserts, their Undesert rather is an expedient*

expedient Consideration in this Act of Grace. —

How Undesert rather than Desert should be an expedient Consideration towards an Election, which is exclusive of every Consideration but the arbitrary Will of the Elector, is what I want to learn; and further, Mr. Coles himself, and all his Disciples, to evade the Force of an Objection which they have never yet removed, in other Places acknowledge, that *Faith and good Works are a certain and necessary Consequence of Election — as the contrary is of Non-Election.* — I should be glad they would inform us, how this Consequence arises. No Effect can be but from some Cause, and from a Cause too that is equal to the Effect. If this Consequence of theirs then is invariable and certain, it must flow from some fixed immutable Reason or Cause. If they resolve it into the Fore-knowledge of God, with respect to the Use or Abuse of Liberty; this is giving up their main Principle, and contradicting themselves. If they argue from Effect to Cause, and judge of Mens otherwise unknown Election from their Faith and Practice; this is making it conditional, and to all Intents and Purposes takes in *the Works and Worthiness of Men as causal, influential, or motive thereto.* Mr. Coles says positively, *that the Decree of Election is secret, and cannot be known to us but by the Event.* If the Decree is a Secret, the Conditions of it must be so; if *knowing it by the Event* is meant, a Judgment formed from our Actions, this argues against them; if *the Event* refers to a future State, when Reward and Punishments actu-

ally take place, it is talking altogether in the dark, and only shews that they build upon Uncertainties, and draw Conclusions from Premises, of the Truth whereof they have no Knowledge or Understanding.

Mr. *Pickering* has been quite uniform in his Conduct respecting the late Controversy ; his Politicks bear a Resemblance to those of *France* ; he has kept intrench'd to the Chin in his Pulpit, and played with his great Church Artillery upon the Enemy in the open Plain ; nor has it been possible by any Art or Stratagem to force his Lines, or bring him to a pitch'd Battle. The Comfort is, that his Fire has done about as much Execution as did the Cannon of the Rebels at the Battle of *Culloden*.

Before I conclude, I would make a little Observation upon what has made some Noise of late, namely, *Mr. Foster's Account of the Behaviour of the late Earl of Kilmarnock*, it having been Mr. *Foster's* Part to assist his Lordship in his Preparation for the important and awful Scene of Death ; and from his own Account of all the Conversation they had together, it does not appear that he ever recommended to him a Reliance on the Merits and Intercession of Christ : This has given great Umbrage to many of his dissenting Brethren, especially those who rest Salvation singly on that Article of Faith. To the latter I have already given the Reason of my Dissent ; how much nearer the other is to the Truth, may be a Question : but the Truth, I think, lies between them.

I cannot

I cannot suppose, in the Account Mr. *Foster* published of the unhappy Earl, he omitted any such material Part of their Conversation, as he is complain'd of for not introducing, he having been so very circumstantial in Things much more trifling than that, much more so in the Opinion of many than was necessary, or even decent, in publishing an Account of the Behaviour of a truly penitent State Criminal : Of what Service it could be to the World, or what Reputation to the Father Confessor, to expose the worst Part of his private Character, and in such ambiguous Terms too, that the Reader hardly knows what to suppose bad enough to be meant ; of all this the World has taken the Liberty to judge.

To expect Salvation, merely from the Merits of Christ's Suffering, is a Doctrine that Christ never taught ; nor the Tenor of the Gospel can never be made to warrant. But though this Opinion is carried to the greatest Extream ; and Extreams on the other hand may be, and often are gone into, if Mr. *Foster* is such a singular Divine, as to think no Advantage accrues from the Death and Suffering of Christ, yet strange it is that any under the Character of a Minister of the Gospel should, upon such Occasions as that under Consideration, not have it once in his Mind, so much as to recommend the Gentleman to the Assistance of the Grace of God, *the better to prepare himself for that awful Change* ; but this (tho' no more strange than true) is the Case.

Such is the Weakness of Human Nature, such the Deceitfulness and Instability of the Human Mind; so strong the Biass to the Pleasures of Sense, so little Inclination or Relish for Enjoyments purely spiritual, such as those of Heaven are supposed to be; so depraved and debased is the Soul of Man, especially a Man who has spent his Days in *Vanity and Impurity*; that it is morally impossible, barely by his own Strength or Application, from any Consideration or Motive whatever, to withdraw his Attachment from all these, and fix his Desire upon the Divine Being, and upon those intellectual Enjoyments of another World. This Change of Objects must be preceded by a Change of Heart. And nothing but the purifying awakening Work of Divine Grace is sufficient for it. A strange Divine then, and strange Divinity, where this Grace has no Share. The Complaint is certainly just, *this Conduct is most consistent with Pagan Principles*. Happy for that unfortunate Lord, that the great Judge, before whom he has since been arraigned, would take no Advantage of the Inconvenience he was under of not having better Information. Nay, I am so fully persuaded of his Penitence, that I cannot help thinking he had the secret Assistance of this Grace, though Mr. *Foster* forgot to advise him to recur to it.

As the Earl of *Kilmarnock* was never recommended to an adequate Means for securing future Happiness; so he was left to make his Exit, without any Certainty of it; the unhappy

py Gentleman *had still this Clog upon his Mind, he could not be certain*——to which he was only told (miserable Comfort indeed!) *If he aimed at Certainty in that grand Point, he might unnecessarily perplex his Mind.*——Such a Certainty was not attainable by any Person in his Condition. That grand Point was the only Point in Question, and the grander the Point, the more need for Certainty. Such a Certainty may not be attainable upon Mr. *Foster's* Principles, but upon the Principles of primitive Christianity I think it is. If he would not talk merely upon the Principles of Nature, but admit the Super-addition of Grace, he might learn another and a better Lesson concerning this Matter. This Divine Grace, that can work such a Change in a willing Mind, as really to reconcile it to its Maker, can also clearly and certainly evidence to it the Truth of that Reconciliation; it is possible that it may, and reasonable it should. The Grace of God is sufficient for it, and the Goodness of God is magnified in it. The Misfortune is, Mr. *Foster* was out of his Depth. His Divinity it must be allowed is very shallow, but then he should not meddle with Things he does not understand, especially as it is a Maxim to be found somewhere, that *where Mystery begins his Religion ends.*

F I N I S.

Written by R. Bell.

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